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WHA/BSC FOR DOUGLAS BARNES  
WHA/USOAS ROBERT MANZANARES

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PA](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [OAS](#)

SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: OAS SG STEERS CLEAR OF INTERNAL FIGHTS,  
TWEAKS THE U.S. ON ITS LEADERSHIP IN THE REGION

REF: ASUNCION 0177

11. (U) SUMMARY. OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza used a visit to Paraguay to focus on the 2008 Presidential elections but declined to enter the debate on a number of swirling controversies. He offered generally favorable views on the state of democracy in Latin America, but criticized U.S. leadership, remarking that the U.S. had lost authority in Latin America. Insulza pledged the OAS would observe the 2008 elections. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) In the course of his visit April 11 focusing on upcoming Presidential elections, Insulza met with political figures, including President Duarte and opposition party leaders. The leaders of the opposition parties' National Coalition' coalition complained about perceived bias within Paraguay's Elections Tribunal (TSJE) and concerns about the potential for fraud in the 2008 elections. Insulza, however, declined to render judgment remarking publicly that he considered concerns about the country's electoral tribunal to be quite "normal." He specifically declined to weigh in on the opposition's efforts to remove two of the TSJE's three representatives for firing the TSJE's IT Director last December under alleged political pressure from the ruling Colorado Party.

13. (U) Commenting more broadly about the state of democracy in Latin America, Insulza did not register alarm about the resurgence of the "left" in Latin America, qualifying this phenomenon as "normal." He remarked that there existed a risk of conflict if the process ideologies hardened to an extreme but that he did not presently perceive this to be a genuine threat. Rejecting the notion there existed a leftist bloc, he attributed the present shift left in the region to a rediscovery of the importance of the State's role, implying conversely a rejection of neoliberalism's message that the State was the source of all problems. Questioned in his interview with center-left Paraguayan daily "Ultima Hora" about whether the OAS or the United States was the guardian of democracy in Latin America, Insulza responded that he didn't "believe the U.S. was in a condition to protect democracy in Latin America." He went on to say that the U.S. was entangled in other parts of the world and as a result had lost authority in Latin America.

14. (U) In meeting with TSJE President Juan Manuel Morales -- one of the two TSJE representatives the opposition would like to see removed -- Insulza committed the OAS to sending observers to Paraguay's Presidential election that will likely be schedule for April 2008. The OAS reported sent some 100 observers to the 2003 presidential election. to monitor pre-election and election day activities.

15. (U) COMMENT: Insulza's critique of the U.S. scored a headline for the paper's interview with Insulza despite the fact that the interview covered more broadly his views on democracy in Latin America writ large. No doubt the opposition welcomes OAS monitoring as a measure of protection. Of course, more egregious fraud and irregularities can occur just as readily in the months running up to elections and the OAS will be in far less a position to address those kinds of concerns.  
CASON